

Michigan Native American Thematic Unit

Here are some ideas for making your Michigan Native American unit come alive!

- **Immerse the room in Native American books, legends, pictures, etc.**
- **Make centers that give the students experience doing and making things as Native Americans would. ie-use craft sticks for making small containers, weave a placemat or sit-upon, make a dream catcher out of a paper plate by cutting out the center part and punching holes around the edges. Then use yarn or embroidery floss to weave through the center. Add feathers and beads using more yarn at the bottom.**
- **Have your students make up a Native American name that fits their personalities/talents. Then have them make name tags using tag board to wear throughout the month. Try using their native names during class! ie-Swift Rabbit might be a good name for someone who is good at running, yet rather shy. You may also have them write cinquain poems about their new Native American names to display in the classroom.**
- **Build a wigwam in your classroom! Use a small dome tent and cover it (using safety pins) with tan or brown sheets to make it even more realistic. Have several students at a time read Native American myths and legends inside or if your tent is big enough, invite the entire class inside for a group lesson or story.**
- **Teach your students a simple rain dance using simple movements like rubbing your fingers together, snapping fingers, rubbing hands together and beating on your thighs to create soft and loud rain sounds.**
- **Teach your students a Michigan Native American song. I like the book, Michigan Song Bag. There is a beautiful song in the book about Indian names in Michigan!**

- **Visit your nearest Nature Center for hands-on Native American Programs. ie- The Kalamazoo Nature Center offers a wonderful program about the Three Fires Tribe, Potawatomi. The students are able to see a wigwam, learn about cooking, gardening, weaving, making a fire, using furs, games, and much more.**
- **Invite area museums to your classroom to share artifacts or even art made by Native Americans. The Kalamazoo Institute of Arts offers an in-school program about Native Americans called The Circle of Life.**
- **Have your students do a WebQuest about a particular tribe. There are thousands of WebQuests available on-line.**
- **Have your students write a week-long journal as a Chippewa (or another tribe) boy or girl. In the journal pages, have them describe life in the village, daily jobs, the family unit, food, ceremonies, beliefs, etc. Each student should design a cover with his/her Native American name and include a Michigan Native American legend summarized in his or her own words. I like to use this assignment as an assessment tool, so I have them do the assignment at the end of our unit.**